

EXAMINATION ARRANGEMENTS

1.1. General

- 1.1.1. Examination for the award of a Higher Degree by Research shall have two stages.
- (i) submission of the thesis and its independent preliminary assessment by each of the approved examiners;
 - (ii) an oral examination of the candidate by the examiners which may be preceded by a presentation.
- 1.1.2. Following the second stage, the examiners shall submit their recommendation in respect of the candidate to the Academic Registrar. The authority to grant academic awards of the University rests with Academic Council. If the recommendation is that the University confer a PhD, then the signature of the Academic Registrar on the Examiners' Report Form shall be deemed to represent, in his or her capacity as Secretary of Academic Council, the conferment of that award.

1.2. Candidate's Responsibilities

- 1.2.1. The candidate shall ensure that sufficient copies of the thesis are submitted to the Academic Registry within the approved period of registration.
- 1.2.2. Submission of the thesis is at the discretion of the candidate.
- 1.2.3. The candidate shall confirm that the thesis has not been and is not being submitted for any other comparable academic award.
- 1.2.4. The candidate must notify the First Supervisor if they wish the appointment of an Independent Chair.
- 1.2.5. The candidate shall confirm that the thesis is his/her own work.
- 1.2.6. The candidate must ensure that all tuition fees due have been paid.
- 1.2.7. The candidate shall provide confirmation, where applicable, that ethical approval has been granted.
- 1.2.8. The candidate must provide confirmation that they have passed all 120 credits of Level 7 units.

1.3. Appointment of Examiners

- 1.3.1. Examiners shall be appointed by the relevant Faculty Research Degrees Committee on the basis of nomination by the First Supervisor; nominations should be made approximately 6 months before the anticipated date of the formal examination.
- 1.3.2. A candidate shall be examined by at least two and not more than three examiners of whom at least one shall be an internal examiner and one an external examiner. Academic Registry shall notify the candidate, on request, the number of examiners appointed.
- 1.3.3. An internal examiner shall be a member of staff of the University or of an affiliated or associated institution or of the candidate's collaborating establishment.
- 1.3.4. An internal examiner should not have examined another thesis put forward by the candidate's First Supervisor during the previous two years. In exceptional circumstances, the Faculty Research Degrees Co-ordinator may waive this but an Independent Chair must be appointed in accordance with **1.6**. The Faculty Research Degrees Co-ordinator must report to the Faculty

Research Degrees Committee the particular circumstances that justified such exceptional approval.

- 1.3.5. Internal examiners should not normally have published with, sought external finance with, or delivered a joint conference paper with the candidate during the period of the candidate's registration. In exceptional circumstances, the Faculty Research Degrees Co-ordinator may waive this but an Independent Chair must be appointed in accordance with **1.6**. The Faculty Research Degrees Co-ordinator must report to the Faculty Research Degrees Committee the particular circumstances that justified such exceptional approval.
- 1.3.6. Internal examiners must not have been a supervisor for the candidate during the period of the candidate's registration.
- 1.3.7. If the candidate is on the permanent academic staff of the University or of an affiliated or associated institution, a second external examiner shall be appointed.
- 1.3.8. Examiners shall have appropriate subject, research and or professional expertise in the general area of the candidate's research topic and one external examiner shall normally have experience as a specialist in the topic to be examined.
- 1.3.9. At least one external examiner shall have experience of examining research degree candidates at the appropriate level. In exceptional circumstances, the Faculty Research Degrees Co-ordinator may waive this where the internal examiner has experience of examining research degree candidates at the appropriate level but an Independent Chair must be appointed in accordance with **1.6**. The Faculty Research Degrees Co-ordinator must report to the Faculty Research Degrees Committee the particular circumstances that justified such exceptional approval
- 1.3.10. External examiners shall be independent of the University and of any affiliated or associated institution or collaborating establishment, and shall not have acted previously as the candidate's supervisor External Examiners should not have published with, sought external finance with, or delivered a joint conference paper with the candidate during the period of the candidate's registration.
- 1.3.11. An External Examiner should not have examined another thesis put forward by the candidate's First Supervisor during the previous two years. In exceptional circumstances, the Faculty Research Degrees Co-ordinator may waive this but an Independent Chair must be appointed in accordance with **1.6**. The Faculty Research Degrees Co-ordinator must report to the Faculty Research Degrees Committee the particular circumstances that justified such exceptional approval.
- 1.3.12. External Examiners should not have been a member of the staff of the University of Portsmouth during the candidate's period of study.
- 1.3.13. No candidate currently registered for a higher degree by research shall act as an examiner.

1.4. Preliminary Assessment and Referral

- 1.4.1. Each approved examiner shall provide on the appropriate form an initial assessment of the candidate's thesis.
- 1.4.2. This assessment shall be forwarded to the Academic Registry at least 3 working days before the date set for the formal oral examination (*viva voce*).
- 1.4.3. If the required assessments are not received by Academic Registry by the due date, then the formal oral examination (*viva voce*) may be postponed on the authority of the Academic Registrar.

- 1.4.4. Where the examiners are agreed that the thesis is unsatisfactory and that no useful purpose would be served by conducting the formal oral examination (*viva voce*), they shall agree a referral for the candidate.
- 1.4.5. In the event of a referral being agreed, the examiners must agree and provide a clear and explicit written summary of the shortcomings of the original thesis, and this shall form part of the conditions of referral communicated to the candidate by the Academic Registry.
- 1.4.6. A referred candidate must re-register and pay a repeat fee.
- 1.4.7. The period of referral will last 12 months although the candidate can submit earlier. If the referred candidate fails to submit within the referral period, then the candidate will be failed and their registration regarded as terminated.
- 1.4.8. Their period of registration shall be extended for 12 months from the date of the referral communicated to the candidate by the Academic Registry.
- 1.4.9. If the examiners after assessing the thesis submitted in satisfaction of the referral requirement remain of the view that the thesis is unsatisfactory and that no useful purpose would be served by conducting the formal oral examination (*viva voce*), they shall fail the candidate and the candidate's registration will be regarded as terminated.
- 1.4.10. In the event that the examiners cannot agree a decision, after the initial assessment of either the original thesis or the thesis submitted in satisfaction of the referral requirement, then the matter shall be referred to the Chair of the relevant Faculty Research Degrees Committee who shall, with the support of Academic Registry, attempt to assist the examiners in reaching a consensus decision. If no consensus can be reached within a reasonable period of time then new examiners shall be appointed in accordance with regulation 1.3 above. The newly appointed examiners will carry out an initial assessment of the thesis without reference to the views of the previously appointed examiners.

1.5. Examination

- 1.5.1. The examiners approved by the University shall examine the candidate orally on the subject of the thesis and on the field of knowledge or learning within which the thesis falls.
- 1.5.2. The First Supervisor shall arrange for the examination to take place in the University at a time mutually acceptable to the examiners. In exceptional circumstances and with the prior agreement of the examiners, the University Research Degrees Committee may allow the examination to be held elsewhere. Such a decision and the reasons for it shall be recorded in the minutes.
- 1.5.3. Any or all supervisors may be permitted to attend the examination with the agreement of the candidate. The supervisor(s) will take no part in the examination

1.6. Independent Chair

- 1.6.1. If a candidate requires an Independent Chair, they shall inform their First Supervisor when they submit their thesis to Academic Registry.
- 1.6.2. The University will also appoint an Independent Chair should any of the following circumstances exist:
 - (i) If the external examiner does not have experience of examining research degree candidates at the appropriate level;
 - (ii) If the candidate has submitted the thesis against the advice of their First Supervisor;
 - (iii) If the supervisory team or Faculty Research Degree Committee identify concerns that require the presence of an independent authority to oversee the examination;

- (iv) If the internal examiner has examined another thesis put forward by the candidate's First Supervisor during the previous two years;
- (v) If an internal examiner has published with, sought external finance with, or delivered a joint conference paper with the candidate during the period of the candidate's registration.
- (vi) The external examiner has examined another thesis put forward by the candidate's First Supervisor during the previous two years.
- (vii) If the examiners fail to reach a unanimous verdict and a further examiner is appointed with a new formal examination.

1.6.3. The role of the Independent Chair is to chair and maintain a record of the examination and assist the examiners in following University procedure. The Independent Chair will not act as an examiner of the thesis.

1.6.4. Where the University appoints an Independent Chair in accordance with **1.6.2**, Academic Registry will write to the student to inform them of this and the reasons why an Independent Chair has been appointed.

1.6.5. The Independent Chair will be appointed by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee and will be a member of staff experienced in research who:

- (i) is not from the candidate's department;
- (ii) has not been involved with the candidate's research at any stage.

1.6.6. No member of University staff will serve as an Independent Chair of an examination more than three times a year.

1.7. Examiners' Report and Recommendation

1.7.1. Following the oral examination, the examiners shall complete a joint report, which will include one of the following recommendations agreed unanimously by the examiners:

- (i) that the degree for which the candidate submitted should be awarded; or
- (ii) that the degree for which the candidate submitted should be awarded subject to minor amendments or corrections to the thesis (and in this case the time-limit for the receipt of the satisfactorily amended or corrected thesis shall be 6 months). The report must also identify how many and which of the examiners will signify satisfaction with the minor amendments or corrections; or
- (iii) that the degree for which the candidate submitted should not be awarded but that the candidate should amend and re-submit the thesis and be re-examined once only. In this case, the recommendation must state clearly whether or not the re-examination shall be by means of a formal oral examination (*viva voce*). The recommendation must also be accompanied by a clear and explicit written summary of both the amendments suggested and the shortcomings of the original thesis. A candidate required to re-submit the thesis for re-examination must re-register and pay the repeat fee. Their period of registration shall be extended for 12 months from the date of the formal oral examination (*viva voce*); or
- (iv) that the degree for which the candidate submitted should not be awarded and the candidate should not be permitted to submit for re-examination.; or
- (v) in the case of a candidate who had submitted for PhD, that the degree of MPhil be awarded subject to the any minor amendments or corrections to the thesis (and in this case the time-limit for the receipt of the satisfactorily amended or corrected thesis shall be 6 months).). The report must also identify how many and which of the examiners will signify satisfaction with the minor amendments or corrections

1.7.2. Should the examiners be unable to unanimously agree a decision they should follow the procedures below.

1.8. Failure to Reach Unanimous Recommendation

- 1.8.1. Where the examiners are not able to agree a unanimous recommendation, they should submit individual reports and recommendations. In this event, the Chair of the relevant Faculty Research Degrees Committee, with support from Academic Registry, shall:
- (i) uphold a majority recommendation, provided that the majority includes at least one external examiner; or
 - (ii) uphold the recommendation of the external examiner; or
 - (iii) appoint an additional external examiner and require that the *viva voce* examination be repeated. Where an additional external examiner is appointed, the thesis will be submitted to the additional external examiner who will complete a Preliminary Assessment as detailed at 9.4 before the *viva voce* examination.

- 1.8.2. The second oral examination will be arranged at a mutually convenient time to ensure all the examiners are in attendance. The University will uphold the majority recommendation.

1.9. Re-Examination

- 1.9.1. A candidate required to submit a corrected or revised thesis but who fails to do so by the date set by the examiners shall be regarded as having failed the examination.

- 1.9.2. Where the examination of the thesis, whether by means of a formal oral examination or otherwise, is a second examination, the examiners shall complete a joint report which shall also include one of the following recommendations agreed unanimously by the examiners:

- (i) that the degree for which the candidate submitted, should be awarded; or
- (ii) that the degree for which the candidate submitted should be awarded subject to minor amendments or corrections to the thesis (and in this case the time-limit for the receipt of the satisfactorily amended or corrected thesis shall be 6 months). The report must also identify how many and which of the examiners will signify satisfaction with the minor amendments or corrections; or
- (iii) that the degree for which the candidate submitted should not be awarded and the candidate should not be permitted to submit for re-examination; or
- (iv) in the case of a candidate who had submitted for PhD, that the degree of MPhil be awarded subject to the any minor amendments or corrections to the thesis (and in this case the time-limit for the receipt of the satisfactorily amended or corrected thesis shall be 6 months).). The report must also identify how many and which of the examiners will signify satisfaction with the minor amendments or corrections.

- 1.9.3. Re-examination shall concentrate on the extent to which the candidate has adequately addressed the originally identified shortcomings of the thesis and how effectively the candidate has responded to the amendments suggested.

- 1.9.4. Should the examiners be unable to unanimously agree a decision they should follow the procedures below.

1.10. Failure to Agree Unanimous Recommendation After Re-examination

- 1.10.1. Where the examiners are not able to agree a unanimous recommendation, they should submit individual reports and recommendations. In this event, the Chair of the relevant Faculty Research Degrees Committee, with support from Academic Registry, shall:

- (i) uphold a majority recommendation, provided that the majority includes at least one external examiner; or
- (ii) uphold the recommendation of the external examiner; or
- (iii) appoint an additional external examiner and require that the oral examination be repeated. Where an additional external examiner is appointed, the revised thesis will be submitted to the additional examiner with the examiners report and recommendations from the first oral examination. The revisions required from the first oral examination cannot be modified. The additional examiner will submit a report regarding the standard of the revisions to the resubmitted thesis and their adequacy in meeting the objectives set by the original examiners.

1.10.2. The second oral examination will be arranged at a mutually convenient time to ensure all the examiners are in attendance. The University will uphold the majority recommendation.

1.11. Posthumous Awards

Research awards may be awarded posthumously by the University Research Degrees Committee (URDC) on the basis of a thesis completed by a candidate which is ready for submission for examination. In such cases, URDC will seek evidence that the candidate would have been likely to have been successful had the *viva voce* examination taken place.

1.12. Award Date

1.12.1. The award date of a candidate shall be defined as one of the following:

- (i) the date of a successful formal oral examination (*viva voce*), where successful means a recommendation for an award being made, including a recommendation that requires minor amendments or correction to the thesis; or
- (ii) in the case of re-examination where the re-examination is not by means of a formal oral examination (*viva voce*), the date on which the examiners make the recommendation of the award as signified by the date on which they sign the UP7 form.

1.13. Completion Date

1.13.1. The date of completion shall be defined as the date on which the final bound copy of the thesis is submitted.

Links to useful information

[Research Supervisors Handbook](#)

[Research Students Handbook](#)